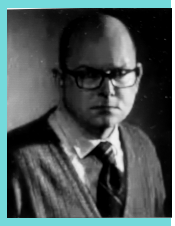
Issue #423 May 16, 2020

THE COMPLEAT TRAVEL BUG

"LIKE ALL GREAT TRAVELLERS, I HAVE SEEN MORE THAN I REMEMBER AND REMEMBER MORE THAN I HAVE SEEN." - BENJAMIN D. ISRAELI

A Letter From The Editor



Hey Travel Buggers,
Apologies for the delay in getting this latest issue out. For that you can thank the good people at GeoCities, who do not exactly make it easy for content creators to recover archived material. (But when you see this issue's Guide To Upstate New York, originally written in May 1992, I think you'll see the effort was worthwhile).
You'll note I've tinkered with the format again. I'm still on the fence about some of the new headline colors, so if you prefer to go back to the old colors, drop me a line.
Please remember, this newsletter is not formatted to be read on cellphone, tablet, or computer — and it never will be. I've put a lot of care into making it a printable PDF that one can print out on actual paper, to read on the bus or to share with a friend.
You'll also note I finally updated my Editor's photo, with a new photo that was taken for my security pass at the building I work at. It was not easy persuading the guy at the security desk to print out an extra copy for me, but it was much cheaper than any other option.
Anyhoo, enjoy the issue and have a "bon" voyage.
—Colin Robinson, Editor

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The Big "O"

So you're going to Omaha! Here are a few things you'll want to see and do when you visit "The Big O."

The Old Market

Located in downtown Omaha, this area was once home to a number of alcoholic drifters or hobo types. Now those people have been removed and it is a shopping area.

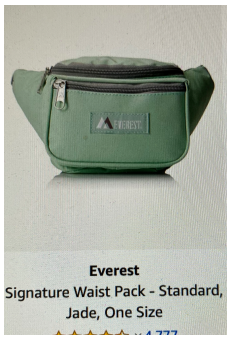
The Mutual of Omaha Building

This local landmark is home to the world-famous mutual insurance company of the same name. Mutual insurance means the company is owned by its policy holders, unlike other insurance companies which are owned by investors who don't necessarily own policies with that company. Please note that the type of insurance company does not dictate the type of insurance it sells. You can still have a whole life policy or a term life policy, for instance,

(cont'd on Page 2)

The Joy, Comfort, and Utility of the Fanny Pack

When it came to traveling, I used to be a cargo short man. My thought on the matter was simple: more pockets meant more room for my various journals, along with any trinkets I may purchase in local bazaars. But then one day, on a trip to the gorgeous Boise Airport, a certain product caught my eye in the window of the Greenbelt Magazine Shop (their local version of Hudson News or any other similar airport goods provider). It was a fanny pack, with the words "SO EXTRA" emblazoned on the side. In a burst of sudden whimsy I purchased it then and there on my Visa debit card, along with a pack of Juicy Fruit gum and a copy of FHM Magazine (I like the crossword).



Reader, believe me when I say that since that moment, I have become a new man. My chapstick, my passport, my pocket-size book of the complete works of humorist Dave Barry – they all fit comfortably in my fanny pack. With room to spare! And my cargo shorts? Well, I still wear those too. Because you can never have enough storage when you're on the go. ◊

?? JUST ASKIN' ??

Does life get any better than the perfect espresso and biscotti di nocciola as you watch the tourists pass by from your friendly neighborhood trattoria? There's just something a little more special about a Tim Hortons in an airport, and it's not just because this one was also a Taco Bell. All I could think as I boarded the plane back to Staten Island from my trip to Jonestown Guyana was "la dolce vita."

(The Big "O," cont'd from Page 1)

or a universal policy or a variable universal policy from a mutual insurance company. Doesn't matter. Could also be a group life policy, a simplified issue life policy, or even final expense insurance, which has some restrictions and may not be considered a traditional life insurance policy at all. This building is brown and rectangular.

The Bob Kerry Pedestrian Bridge

This is a footbridge that crosses the Missouri River, a very powerful waterway that sometimes carries drowned animal bodies from as far away as Sioux City, Iowa, or even South Dakota. The bridge is named for a United States Senator who moved away from Omaha almost immediately after serving his term.

The famous Bob Kerry Pedestrian Bridge

The Blackstone Hotel

Birthplace of the Reuben sandwich. Some people think a Reuben sandwich can have either pastrami or spiced turkey as its meat filling. But I'm a purist, and insist on corned beef with my Swiss cheese, sauerkraut and Russian dressing. Russian dressing is something of a misnomer as it's a purely American invention. It's a type of sauce combining mayonnaise and catsup (correct spelling) that often includes spices such as pimentos or chives. This sauce is similar to Thousand Island dressing, which did, in fact, originate in the Thousand Island area of upstate New York, but usually contains chunkier ingredients such as pickles, bell peppers, green olives, black olives, nut meats, and sometimes hard-boiled eggs, which I am not a fan of. I'll take Russian dressing every time, please. Also important to the

(cont'd on Page 5)

A Guide To Upstate New York

If you're looking to escape the hustle and bustle of Staten Island, look no further than Upstate New York. Now, a lot of city folks say "Upstate" and are referring to Westchester County, which while technically located north of the city, isn't truly within Upstate New York proper. I've been in many a heated debate over the true boundaries of the Upstate New York region, but I am firmly in the camp that it does not include Westchester County. I consider Upstate New York to be as far north as Albany, Utica, and Syracuse. If you head slightly west of Albany, it becomes the Central New York region. If you keep heading west past Utica, it becomes Western New York (including Rochester and Buffalo). Keep in mind, some of these cities can be considered both Central New York and Upstate New York, or Western New York and Upstate New York, but no city can be labelled both Central and Western New York. This is considered an egregious error to the locals.

As I was saying, a lot of New York City dwellers want to escape the concrete jungle -- especially during the autumn. People get stiffies for Fall activities such as leaf peeping, haunted hay rides, and apple picking. But I must divulge that I have found a better time to make the trek Upstate: Thanksgiving Eve. Ideally, you'll want to drive with relatives or take the Greyhound bus with strangers around 4:00PM, maybe 5:00PM if you're feeling especially self-indulgent. Thanksgiving Eve is an ideal time to go somewhere like an apple orchard because the crowds will have died down and you'll have more space to explore the rows of apple trees all for yourself. If the orchard isn't open, just trespass.

Whatever apples you find, you will have the pride of knowing they didn't go home with other folks back in September or October because they were saving themselves for you. It's the purest form of kismet. ◊

A few travel thoughts I had while waiting to speak with an Amtrak representative about the quality of this year's foliage along the Northeast Regional route:

1. I wouldn't let Rick Steves guide me out of a paper bag.

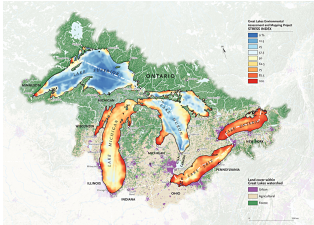
2. Trains are better than rowboats, but worse than sailboats. Cars are even with trains.

3. People used to dress up to go on airplanes. Nowadays they don't. Just my two cents.

4. The Mona Lisa is a lot smaller than you'd expect!

A LAKELY STORY

I'll admit it: I am a big time Great Lakes enthusiast. For a period of time, I lived in Detroit working as a union agitator on behalf of the automobile companies. I would sew discord and whatnot. Those were the days! Anyway, on the weekends, I'd go visit the five Great Lakes which are as follows: Lake Michigan, Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, Lake Huron, and Lake Superior. Each one is so beautiful and full of water. I think of them often. You should absolutely check 'em out because they really are something! ◊



WHAT A GAS

Apologies for being off the grid so to speak, but I've been a real busy beaver lately. Continuing my search for the heart and soul of America. And what better way to seek out said heart and said soul than by touring what I like to call the backdoor entry into every American's fervor: Gas Stations.

This week I'm headed south to New Braunfels, Texas. Home of the world's largest gas station, Buc-ee's. 68,000 sq ft of gas station to be precise.

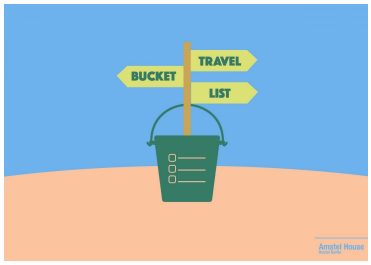
I know what you're thinking. He's not in it for the gas. He's in it for all the fixings: Sugared nuts. Dipping dots. Fudge fjords. World famous jerkys and gristles. Brisket slaughtered right outside the establishment. But you're sorely mistaken. The main draw for me is ole Buc-ee himself - the station's beloved mascot.. You might call me el numero uno fan de la beaver.

MEET YOUR SEAT

To me, it's not about the destination, it's the journey...and there's nothing I love more than a plane ride across the globe. Sometimes I just need to get away from the hustle and bustle and the daily grind of the big city, so I book a round trip Commercial flight to Dehli, India and ride that big bird in the sky. Nothing says luxury like sitting for 16 hours in a worked-in, leather seat that's completely upright, where I can watch the finest cinematic masterpieces from the comforts of my own seat. What's great is that anything I missed in theaters, I can watch on my flight, like 2019's star-studded action flick, Hobbs and Shaw.

And what's the best seat in the house, you ask? Row 29, middle seat, of course. I like to make sure I'm seated right at the back so I can use the washroom for as long as I'd like and use all the amenities. Just a fun pro-tip, the best hand soaps and lotions are in the Air Sydney flights. Your lavender-smelling, sterile hands will thank me later. ◊

Top Five Travel Destinations On My "Bucket List"



1. Cape Henlopen State Park, Delaware
2. Rehoboth Beach, Delaware
3. Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
4. Brandywine Creek State Park (New Castle County, Delaware)
5. Phoenix, Arizona

FOR "ALLEY" CATS ONLY

I would compile a list of the best bowling alleys in Morris County, New Jersey, but all true Jersey Boys know there is only one destination pin palace when you're in the tri-state area: Pastime Lanes in Mendham Township. This bowling alley has all the hits: french fries, only three lanes, and the option to book birthday party reservations. Built in 1953, this alley has never been restored and takes two minutes to return the ball after each bowler's turn. Insider tip: Gale who runs the shoe swap will not let you try on multiple pairs of shoes of the same size, so don't count on it. Now, SPARE me the excuses and go hit the lanes because TURKEYS aren't just for Thanksgiving. ◊

(The Big "O," cont'd from Page 2)

Reuben sandwich is the bread, which is always rye. I will accept a or pumpernickel-rye marble bread. That's because pumpernickel is actually a type of dark rye bread. Pumpernickel is said to come from Germany, and the word itself has something of an amusing etymology. While some would have you believe it stems from a Bavarian word for "hard," most word scientists now agree it is a combination of "pumpern" and "Nickel," which literally means "farting rascal," or "farting devil." In any event, the Blackstone Hotel no longer has a working restaurant and does not serve Reubens. Furthermore, it is no longer a hotel. ◊